

Publication

Computing schizophrenia: ethical challenges for machine learning in psychiatry

JournalArticle (Originalarbeit in einer wissenschaftlichen Zeitschrift)

ID 4606392

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Year 2021

Title Computing schizophrenia: ethical challenges for machine learning in psychiatry

Journal Psychological medicine

Volume 51

Number 15

Pages / Article-Number 2515-2521

Recent advances in machine learning (ML) promise far-reaching improvements across medical care, not least within psychiatry. While to date no psychiatric application of ML constitutes standard clinical practice, it seems crucial to get ahead of these developments and address their ethical challenges early on. Following a short general introduction concerning ML in psychiatry, we do so by focusing on schizophrenia as a paradigmatic case. Based on recent research employing ML to further the diagnosis, treatment, and prediction of schizophrenia, we discuss three hypothetical case studies of ML applications with view to their ethical dimensions. Throughout this discussion, we follow the principlist framework by Tom Beauchamp and James Childress to analyse potential problems in detail. In particular, we structure our analysis around their principles of beneficence, non-maleficence, respect for autonomy, and justice. We conclude with a call for cautious optimism concerning the implementation of ML in psychiatry if close attention is paid to the particular intricacies of psychiatric disorders and its success evaluated based on tangible clinical benefit for patients.

Publisher Cambridge University Press

ISSN/ISBN 0033-2917 ; 1469-8978

edoc-URL <https://edoc.unibas.ch/79306/>

Full Text on edoc No;

Digital Object Identifier DOI 10.1017/S0033291720001683

PubMed ID <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/32536358>

Document type (ISI) Journal Article